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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES ARTICLE 140, PROVINCIAL ECONOMY WITH KIRKUK GOVERNOR

REF: BAGHDAD 1304

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. The Ambassador and Kirkuk Governor Abdulrahman Mustafa discussed May 24 Kirkuk's current security situation, economic status, Article 140 implementation, the relationship between the provincial government and the central government, and the boycott of the Provincial Council by the Turcomen and Arab blocs. The Governor described the security situation in this province of approximately 1.1 million people with more than 700,000 living in the city of Kirkuk, as "a manageable problem" and criticized those who "exaggerate" security problems for political reasons. He expressed confidence in the Iraqi Security Forces noting that while there are acts of violence in the province, it does not mean the security forces are unable to handle them. End Summary.

¶2. (C) When asked about the Article 140 process and its implementation in the province, the Governor explained that this is one of the political issues which cause people to exaggerate security problems. People fear the Article 140 process "takes away" from Kirkuk's Arab and Turcomen communities, the Governor explained. In reality, he said, it attempts to "correct past mistakes" without adding anything new to the province. The Ambassador asked about reports that Arabs brought to Kirkuk through the former regime's Arabization policies are being forced out from their homes, and expressed concern that efforts to address past wrongs might create new problems now. The Governor admitted that there has been an influx of Kurds into Kirkuk since 2003, but emphatically refuted allegations that any of the approximately 100,000 Arabs forced to Kirkuk by the former regime will be forced to leave. He cited special committees he has established to investigate such claims as evidence of his commitment to a fair process. The Governor further told the Ambassador that during this visit to Baghdad he gathered the Council of Representatives (CoR) members who represent Kirkuk and scolded them for not accurately depicting Article 140 implementation within the province.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador asked the Governor about the biggest economic challenges Kirkuk faces. The Governor responded quickly that a lack of essential services and unemployment plague the province. The Governor noted that Kirkuk's reconstruction needs date back to the former regime which refused to give Kirkuk much-needed funding. As a result, the Governor said, Kirkuk's infrastructure is in disrepair. As for unemployment, the Governor described an "army of unemployed people," especially among Kirkuk's college graduates. The Ambassador asked about big reconstruction projects, and the Governor noted his desire for a refinery and an expansion to Kirkuk University. Unfortunately, he said, the Ministries of Planning and Higher Education said there are currently no planned projects for the province. The Governor noted that despite his frequent travel to Baghdad, facilitated by the Kirkuk PRT and MND-N, the

relationship between provincial officials and the central government remains underdeveloped.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador asked the Governor about the Arab and Turcomen boycott of Provincial Council (PC) meetings (Note. The Arab and Turcomen blocs occupy 15 out of 40 Provincial Council seats. They have boycotted PC meetings since November 2006 (reftel). End Note). The Governor stated that while the Arab and Turcomen blocs will not attend PC meetings, they remain active in committee meetings. The Ambassador noted that boycotting meetings does not further political dialogue. The Governor agreed, saying that the PC "defends the rights and represents everyone" and noting further that their absences increase the blocs' complaints that they are "marginalized" within the provincial government. The Ambassador encouraged the Governor to continue working to end the boycott.

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